MELKSHAM URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

THE

ANNUAL REPORT

of the

Medical Officer of Health

and the

Public Health Inspector

for the Year 1969

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To the Chairman and Members of

MELKSHAM URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in presenting the Annual Report on the health of the town for 1969.

Not included elsewhere in the reports, but worthy of record is the fact that the Public Health Committee again raised the question of fluoridation of our water supplies (of which it is strongly in favour) with the County Council and West Wilts Water Board in a vain attempt to get our water fluorided and our childrens and future adults teeth improved.

Statistics can appear very dull to the casual observer but they often indicate interesting tendencies. Of note in the 1969 figures is a decrease of birth rate and increase in death rate and no increase in estimated population. This indicates an ageing population and probably a decrease in young couples moving into the area. This ties up with the decrease in new houses over the last two - three years, particularly in the private sector.

In conclusion I would like to thank all Councillors, and especially the Chairman of the Public Health Committee for their help and understanding during the year and also Mr. Acres and our Secretary, Mrs. Wells for so much help and support.

G. WOLFENDEN,

Medical Officer of Health.

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS OF THE COUNCIL

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

G. Wolfenden, M.B., B.Ch., D.P.H.

Who is also Medical Officer of Health to Bradford and Melksham Rural District Council and Assistant County Medical Officer.

PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTOR

W. F. Acres, M.A.P.H.I., A.R.S.H.

Who is also Housing Maintenance Officer and Petroleum Officer for Melksham Urban District Council.

OFFICE

1 King Street, Melksham.

Telephone Melksham 8761

VITAL STATISTICS

These are mainly compiled from figures kindly supplied by the Registrar General.

(a) GENERAL

Area of the District 1,042 acres	
Estimated mid-year population 1969	9,590
Estimated mid-year population 1968	9,590
Dwelling houses at end of 1969	3,150
Average persons per dwelling house	3.04
Product of a penny rate	£1,892

(b) BIRTHS

Live Births

Births	Male	Female	Total
Legitimate	85	67	152
Illegitimate	6	7	13
Total	91	74	165

The Birth Rate was 17.2 per 1,000 population. When corrected for comparability this rate becomes 16.7 per 1,000. This can then be compared with the national rate for 1969 of 16.3 per 1,000 and our 1968 figure of 19.5.

The actual numbers of births decreased by 22.

8% of births were illegitimate.

Still Births

There were no still births during the year.

(c) DEATHS

66 males and 39 females died in 1969 giving a total of 105 deaths. This was five more deaths than in the previous year and give a Death Rate of 10.9.

Adjusted for comparability our rate becomes 13.2 per 1,000 and can be compared with the national rate of 11.9. 69% of our deaths were over 65 years of age.

(d) INFANT MORTALITY

There were no deaths recorded under one year of age.

(e) CAUSES OF DEATH

	Male	Female	Total
Tuberculosis of Respiratory System	1	-	1
Malignant Neoplasm, Stomach	1	-	1
Malignant Neoplasm, Intestine	2	1	3
Malignant Neoplasm, Lung, Bronchus	6	1	7
Malignant Neoplasm, Breast	-	1	1
Malignant Neoplasm, Prostate	1	-	1
Other Malignant Neoplasms	5	5	10
Mental Disorders	-	1	1
Other diseases of Nervous System etc.	2	-	2
Chronic Rheumatic Heart Disease	1	-	1
Ischaemic Heart Disease	22	12	34
Other forms of Heart Disease	2	3	5
Cerebrovascular disease	8	5	13
Other Diseases of Circulatory System	2	2	4
Influenza	1	1	2
Pneumonia	3	3	6
Bronchitis and Emphysema	6	1	7
Other Diseases of Respiratory System	-	1	1
Congenital Anomalies	2	-	2
Motor Vehicle Accidents	1	-	1
All other accidents	-	2	2
	66	39	105

Deaths due to Cancer of the Lung and Coronary disease of the Heart increased.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

We had a minor measles epidemic during the early half of the year, 53 cases being notified.

The eight cases of scarlet fever, which were scattered throughout the year was rather an unusual feature of the years notifications - there had been no previous notifications since 1962 when there were two. The figure is of little importance as scarlet fever, a variety of tonsilitis, does not seem to have the complications that it used to have.

Two of the three cases of Infectious Jaundice (Infectious Hepatitis) notified were in one family. There were fewer cases of this perennial disease than last year (the first year it was notifiable).

No cases of Tuberculosis or Whooping Cough were notified during 1969.

Analysis of Infectious Disease by Age and Sex

Age	Measles		Hepatitis		Dysentery		Scarlet Fever	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Under 1 year	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
1 - 4 years	14	16	-	-	-	-	1	-
5 - 9 years	9	11	1	-	-	-	-	6
10 - 14 years	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
15 and adults	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
Total	24	29	2	1	-	1	1	7

Comparison with Previous Years

Disease	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
Whooping Cough	1	-	20	2	8	-
Measles	4	184	53	183	8	53
Dysentery	-	-	-	-	4	1
Hepatitis	←	not notifiable		→	9	3
Tuberculosis	1	-	-	2	2	-

IMMUNISATION

The tables which follow were kindly supplied by the County Medical Officer of Health.

The percentage of babies born in Melksham in 1968 who received primary immunisation was 88.2. This immunisation is usually done in the first six months of life and is against Diphtheria, Tetanus, Poliomyelitis and unless there is a medical reason against it, Whooping Cough. The figure is lower than usual (it is normally virtually 100%) and even though it compares favourably with the County average of 77.4% it is a little disappointing.

Smallpox Vaccination is usually done in the second year of life and is normally a fairly low figure - because of this the 1969 figure was comparatively satisfactory.

Measles immunisation - a new introduction in 1969 - was hindered in its full impact by the withdrawal, as unsuitable, of one source of vaccine. It too is normally carried out in the second year of life and of those born in 1967 about 25% were immunised.

IMMUNISATION & SMALLPOX VACCINATION STATISTICS 1969

Year of Birth		1969	1968	1967	1966	1965	1960-64	1954-59	Others Under 16
Primary Imms. completed during 1969	Diph.	76	76	2	2	1	9	-	1
	Wh/C.	68	74	2	-	1	-	-	-
	Tetanus	76	76	2	2	1	9	-	2
	Measles	-	19	42	23	6	18	1	-
	Polio	71	76	2	1	2	26	-	-
Reinf. Imms. given in 1969	Diph.	4	51	77	4	33	174	2	1
	Wh/C.	-	20	24	2	2	3	-	-
	Tetanus	4	51	77	4	33	178	2	9
	Polio	-	49	76	3	34	152	5	-

SMALLPOX

	Months				Years		
Age Group	0 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 12	1	2 - 4	5 - 15
Vaccinations	-	-	-	-	56	53	12
Re-vaccinations	-	-	-	-	-	-	10

HOUSING

All applications for Council housing with medical or medico-social factors are referred to me for investigation and report to the Housing Committee. 20 such investigations were carried out this year, 10 of them being in connection with the Kingsbury Square Old People's Flatlets.

The majority of these investigations are elderly persons requiring more suitable housing but there are of course always cases of young married couples with a baby (or two) living in unsuitable accommodation. In many of these cases the medical grounds are inadequate and one has to reluctantly temper ones sympathy in giving a report to the Committee.

I do feel that the young married are a group who require more housing help, especially as their financial stress is probably as great as the elderly.

COUNTY COUNCIL HEALTH SERVICES

The County Council is responsible for the personal health services, under the direction of Dr. C. D. L. Lycett, County Medical Officer of Health.

Four Health Visitors and two District Nurse/Midwives are centred in the town. With the decrease of domiciliary midwifery, the District Nurses are mainly concerned with home nursing. The Health Visitors, each of whom is attached to two of the towns general practitioners, are mainly concerned with the young and old of our population. They give useful advice in the case of children and are particularly helpful to young and inexperienced mothers. The elderly benefit from their care not only by health advice but by the arrangement when necessary of home helps and also by information on other forms of help available from Voluntary, County Council and Central Government sources.

Much of the County Health service centres in the Health Clinic at Lowbourne. Here, every Thursday from 2 - 4 p.m. child welfare clinics are held, also Cytology Clinics (1st and 3rd Wednesdays by appointment 2 - 3 p.m.) and Relaxation (ante natal exercises) are held on Wednesday at 2 p.m. The Clinic also has a Dental Clinic for children (by appointment only).

Other clinics, all by appointment, which are held are Immunisation, Speech Therapy, Remedial Exercises, Orthopaedic and Eneuresis. A Chiropody session for the elderly is also available by appointment.

The Bradford-on-Avon Maternity Hospital hold ante-natal clinics there on Monday and Friday afternoons. A Marriage Guidance session is also held from time to time by the Marriage Guidance Council.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Apart from its own Melksham Hospital the Bath Hospitals are used and they also provide the visiting Consultants. Maternity cases are mainly dealt with at Bradford-on-Avon Maternity Hospital and occasionally Trowbridge and Bath.

LABORATORY SERVICES

All our public health specimens are dealt with by the Public Health Laboratory at Manor Hospital, Bath. Dr. Mann and his staff continue to give us excellent service, especially in the advice they give.

Report of the

PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTOR

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is the thirteenth report I have submitted for this area, and is drafted in accordance with Circular 1/70 of the Department of Health and Social Security.

Duties and responsibilities of the department increased during 1969 with the advent of new legislation, and one welcomed particularly the Housing Act 1969. The implications of the Act and other changes in duties were detailed to the Committee at the applicable time.

Progress on housing matters was very good and not only were condemned houses demolished quickly, but also progress was made in making good use of the cleared sites. Housing maintenance of Council houses was satisfactory, and more pre-war houses were brought up to modern standards.

In certain spheres, particularly routine inspection work on Food Hygiene, Factories, Multiple Occupation and Shops, one would like to see more done, but at the moment this is not possible.

My thanks are again due to the Public Health Committee to Dr. Wolfenden, to Mrs. Wells, and to all colleagues for their ready help and co-operation at all times.

W. F. ACRES,

Public Health Inspector.

HOUSING ACTS 1957, 1961 AND 1964

(i) Action during the year:

Number of inspections and re-inspections	74
Number of Time and Place Notices, Sections 16/57	5
Number of Closing Orders, Section 17/57 (whole house)	2
Number of Closing Orders, Section 18/57 (parts of houses)	-
Number of Demolition Orders, Section 17/57	2
Number of Demolition Orders substituted for Closing Orders, Section 28/57	7
Number of Houses Demolished	19
Number of Repair Notices, Section 9/57	3

The number of demolitions effected exceeds the number of notices served this year and includes eight properties in Union Place/King Street where Closing Orders were made in previous years. The substitution of Demolition Orders for Closing Orders refers to houses in Old Broughton Road, and all these houses were demolished very promptly by the owner together with others where action had been initiated earlier.

All tenants from the condemned properties requiring re-housing by the Council were swiftly accommodated in bungalows, houses or flatlets. This continued the excellent co-operation between the Public Health Committee and the Housing Committee.

(ii) The new Housing Act 1969 came into operation on 25th August 1969 and added considerably to the Council's powers and responsibilities as regards action on sub standard properties and in the vital sphere of improvements to older houses.

(iii) Common Lodging Houses

There are no such houses in the area.

(iv) Houses in Multiple Occupation

It was not possible to get to grips with this problem owing to staff limitation.

[illegible]

(v) Improvements to Older Houses

A further 35 pre-war Council houses were modernised on discretionary grant basis under my control as Housing Maintenance Officer by the Council's own direct labour force at a cost of £13,973. The advantages to the Council, as landlords, and to the tenants are most apparent. Control of the Council's 1,333 houses also enabled the Department to ensure good standards of repair and maintenance in all these houses.

The Health Department, strangely enough, is not involved in improvements to older private houses and it was disappointing to note that despite the Council's lead in this subject only eight standard improvement grants were applied for and granted in 1968 to private owners or occupiers.

The policy of improving older houses to modern standards is a fundamental in all public health progress and one would hope to see more applications by landlords and tenants in the future, particularly with the improved arrangements made by the 1969 Housing Act.

PUBLIC HEALTH ACTS 1936 AND 1961

(i) Number of Inspections 51

Number of Informal Notices served 13

Number of Statutory Notices served 2

Number of Statutory Notices complied 2

Notices complied with (informal) 12

Notices complied with (statutory) 2

Relatively few complaints were received and no difficulties arose in having various defects repaired.

(ii) Verminous Premises and Other Infestations

No verminous premises were reported or discovered. Identification and advice on treatment was given in other instances of insect problems.

(iii) Drainage and Sewerage

Very few houses indeed are not connected to the public sewers in the Urban area, probably less than ten in all. The arrangements for sewerage and the disposal works are reasonably adequate.

Disposal of sludge continued to be of concern to the Public Health Committee, and much time and thought were devoted to the subject at monthly meetings. The problem in the main was caused by irregular service by the contractor who collected the sludge for dispersal over farm land. Ultimately it was agreed to purchase a large tanker to deliver sludge to Bristol for disposal, this method to be used only as a standby.

(iv) Water Supplies

The town receives its supplies from the West Wilts Water Board, but part of the Northern area is linked to the North Wilts Board. Quality is excellent and pressures adequate throughout the town.

The waters are not plumbo-solvent, but are extremely hard. Copies of frequent sampling checks are received from the two Boards, and the occasional check sample is taken by the Department. All were satisfactory.

At the factory having its own well supply for domestic use, all samples taken proved satisfactory.

CLEAN AIR ACT 1956

No formal action was taken, and the infrequent complaint of smoke nuisance from factory chimneys was satisfactorily dealt with by informal action on three occasions. Another problem arose from cable burning in a local scrap yard, and eventually the matter was referred to the Alkali Inspector.

PREVENTION OF DAMAGE BY PESTS ACT 1949

The part-time operator (shared with by the Rural District Council) continues to give excellent service with rodent control work.

During the year 186 properties were treated for rats or mice as compared with 112 the previous year. Of these 91 were domestic premises.

The work is free for domestic premises, but a small charge is made to cover costs in other instances. The operator also deals with other types of infestation such as wasps nests, cluster flies etc.

CARAVAN SITES AND CONTROL OF DEVELOPMENT ACT 1960

The one residential site of 56 caravans is extremely well appointed and all conditions of site licence are fully maintained.

PETROLEUM (CONSOLIDATION) ACT 1928

Eighteen licences were issued involving 67,450 gallons of petroleum. During the year, one licence of 4,000 gallons was discontinued, but a new licence for 500 gallons was issued. The latter licence was issued reluctantly as the installation did not fully conform to Council requirements. This installation had quite recently been installed by a Government department and was thus exempt from local authority requirements; the unfortunate situation arose when the premises became part of a public corporation. The matter was taken up with the Ministry concerned.

Having adopted the revised Home Office Model Code the previous year relating to Principles of Construction and Licensing for Petrol Filling Stations, all inspections were made under the stricter conditions, including the requirement that the electrical installation should be subject to annual testing.

One is again very grateful to the Wiltshire County Fire Brigade (Fire Prevention Department) for their excellent and enthusiastic work as the Council's Inspecting Officers.

Also during the year the new scale of fees was applied under the Miscellaneous (Fees) Variation Order 1968. Licence fees which had last been set in 1928 were increased fourfold.

RENT ACT 1957

No Certificates of Disrepair were applied for, and again no enquiries of any sort.

MILK AND DAIRIES

Regular routine sampling of all milks sold or produced and sold in the Urban area continued under delegated powers from the County Council. No 'Untreated' milk is sold and all figures, therefore, relate to pasteurised milks:-

Samples taken	39
Satisfactory	37
Unsatisfactory	2

Of the two failures recorded, one was a carton of milk from a shop, presumably due to poor stock rotation, and the other from a failure at a dairy outside the area. Both matters were carefully investigated.

There are two producer/retailer licences issued by the County Council and licences issued by this Council are as follows:-

Dealer's (Untreated) Licences	1
Dealer's (Pre-Packed) Untreated	1
Dealer's (Pre-Packed) Pasteurised Licences	14
Dealer's (Pre-Packed) U.H.T. Licences	7

It is interesting to note the advent of U.H.T. milk into the area. Such 'long-life' milk is mainly used as a standby at the moment, but may well become the standard article in the future with deliveries over a week, or even monthly. I would hope that soon date stamping of the carton will be obligatory and clear to the consumer. Code numbers are not really satisfactory for this type of article of food.

NOISE ABATEMENT ACT 1960

The problem of unmuffled road breakers caused a certain amount of difficulty on one or two occasions. Despite every co-operation from the public utilities, there seems to be a disinclination on the part of the operatives to use mufflers. However a personal approach at the time does good.

There were also three occasions when it was necessary to check operators of mobile ice-cream vehicles sounding chimes outside the permitted hours of 12 noon to 7 p.m.

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT 1955

(i) There are no egg pasteurisation plants in the district.

(ii) No systematic routine inspections under the Food Hygiene (General) Regulations 1960 were possible with the staff available, but I was able to link in some inspections with other work. In general, the standard is good and the new shops opened all tended to raise the overall standard.

Numbers of food premises as required by Circular 1/70 grouped in trades:-

Restaurants, Snack Bars etc.	8
Public Houses & Clubs	12
Confectioners	5
Butchers	6
Groceries & General	20
Fruit & Vegetable	3
Dairy	1
Bakers	4
Off Licences	4
Fishmongers	3

(iii) Details of complaints received and dealt with:-

(a) Foreign body (a fly) in a loaf of bread. Investigated as to fly-proofing at factory. No formal action.

(b) Mould in a loaf of bread. Careful investigation of production and storage methods, but no formal action.

(c) Tinned lamb's liver affected by Tyrosin crystals. Investigations led to surrender of the remaining stocks at a distributor's premises in another local authority area.

(d) Seventeen condemnation certificates were issued, mainly at the request of traders for the usual variety of tinned foods, meat, fish etc. The foodstuffs included a total of $9\frac{1}{2}$ cwts. of carcase meat, 2 cwts. of canned meats and 84 lbs of other foods.

(iv) Poultry Inspections

There is one poultry processing premise in the district, and two visits were made during the year. About 50,000 birds are processed, mostly hens and some turkeys.

Inspection, ante-mortem and post-mortem is carried out by the proprietor, and no precise percentage of rejections is available.

(v) Ice Cream Premises

Two new registrations for the storage and sale of Ice Cream were issued during the year. There are no premises manufacturing ice-cream in the town. All registered premises complied with the necessary regulations.

SWIMMING POOLS

(i) Blue Pool

This public pool was conducted in a satisfactory manner. Daily local checks of free chlorine are taken, and I inspect these records from time to time, and also take the occasional sample for bacteriological examination. These were all satisfactory.

Source of water is from the mains and constant re-circulation on a 6/8 hour basis is maintained. Treatment consists of filtration by twin Diafilters, followed by chlorination and then aeration over a cascade.

(ii) Paddling Pool, King George's Field

Hand chlorination of this shallow pool is used and is, in the main satisfactory.

(iii) Shurnhold School

Chlorination and filtration plant proved adequate and samples taken were satisfactory.

(iv) Lowbourne School

Again a small training pool with adequate plant, and samples taken were satisfactory.

OFFICES, SHOPS AND RAILWAY PREMISES ACT 1963

(i) Most of the initial inspections had been carried out in previous years and up-to-date details are as follows:-

	Number of Premises Registered During the Year	Total Number of Registered Premises at End of Year	Number of Persons Employed	No. of Registered Premises receiving a General Inspection During the Year
Offices	-	19	243	-
Shops	2	115	523	2
Wholesale Warehouses	-	1	5	-
Catering Est.	-	12	39	-
Fuel Storage Depot	-	-	-	-
Totals	2	147	810	2

Number of visits of all kinds to registered premises 16

Owing to shortage of staff, the essential follow-up work from the earlier year's satisfactory efforts could not be attempted.

Only a limited number of routine visits was made in this connection mainly on new registrations and some checking of earlier defects being rectified.

(ii) Accidents

Four accidents, all non-fatal, were reported requiring no detailed investigations.

FACTORIES ACT 1961

Action taken is shown in the following table:-

FACTORIES

	Number on Register 31.12.69	Inspections	Written Notices	Occupiers Prosecuted
Inspections				
(1) Factories in which Section 1,2,3,4 and 6 are enforced by Local Authority (non-power)	-	-	-	-
(2) Factories not included in (1) in which Section 7 is enforced by Local Authority (power)	33	8	-	-
(3) Other premises in which Section 7 is enforced by Local Authority (excluding outworkers' premises)	1	-	-	-
Total	34	8	-	-

	Found	Remedied	Referred To H.M. Inspector	Referred by H.M. Inspector	Number of Cases in which prosecutions were instituted
Defects					
Want of Cleanliness (S.1)	-	-	-	-	-
Overcrowding (S.2)	-	-	-	-	-
Unreasonable temperature (S.3)	-	-	-	-	-
Inadequate Ventilation (S.4)	-	-	-	-	-
Ineffective drainage of floors (S.6)	-	-	-	-	-
Sanitary Conveniences (S.7)					
(a) Insufficient	-	-	-	-	-
(b) Unsuitable or defective	1	1	-	1	-
(c) Not separate for sexes	-	-	-	-	-
Other offences against the Act (not including offences relating to Outwork)	1	1	-	-	-
Total	2	2	-	1	-

Outworkers - Making apparel 3

HOUSING MAINTENANCE

As this work takes up a great deal of the Department's time, some reference should be made here. As Housing Maintenance Officer to the Council, the repairs and improvements to the 1,333 Council dwellings is under my control. A direct labour organisation of 23 men, including a foreman, various tradesmen, labourers and apprentices, is operated.

On repairs and decorations alone, some £25,000 per annum is spent. The Department has excellent workshop and stores facilities in the main Bradford Road Depot and sufficient transport facilities.

In this way, some 40% of the town's properties are maintained to a high standard. The work of modernising pre-war Council houses is most rewarding and is greatly appreciated by the tenants concerned.

Most of the maintenance work of other Council properties, e.g. Town Hall, conveniences etc. is also done by the Department.